

Amendments to the Claims:

Listing of Claims:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A drip plate for use in a phase change ink jet printer using solid ink, comprising:

a plate having a substantially planar upper portion and a substantially planar lower portion, each having a first surface and an opposing second surface,

~~an upper portion; and~~

~~———— a lower pointed portion,~~

wherein only the first surface of the upper portion of the plate directly contacts solid ink sticks, and neither surface of the lower portion of the plate directly contacts solid ink sticks;

wherein the lower portion is not coplanar with the upper portion.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The drip plate of claim 1, wherein a heating element is bonded to a second surface~~first side of the upper portion~~plate.

3. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 2, wherein the heating element is a closed loop heater.

4. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 3, wherein the heating element includes a foil heater encapsulated in a thin electrically insulative film.

5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The drip plate of claim 1, wherein the upper portion of the plate~~further includes~~comprising a bent flange extending obliquely upward from the upper side ~~portion~~portion of the drip plate.

6. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 1, wherein the drip plate is made from metal.

7. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 6, wherein the drip plate is made from a nonferrous metal.

8. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 7, wherein the drip plate is made from aluminum

9. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 1, wherein the drip plate is made from plastic

10. (ORIGINAL) The drip plate of claim 9, where the drip plate is injection molded.

11. (ORIGINAL) The plate of claim 10, wherein a heating element is molded into the drip plate.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The drip plate of claim 1, wherein the drip plate~~further comprising~~ includes at least one anchor tab extending from the ~~second side~~first surface of the ~~upper portion of the drip plate located near the center of the plate.~~

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The drip plate of claim 12, wherein the at least one anchor tabs includes multiple tabs~~are~~ arranged in pairs and wherein each pair is arranged substantially symmetrically about a vertical center line.

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The drip plate of claim 1, further comprising a sliver strainer located ~~near a lower edge of the drip plate~~below the area directly contacted by ink sticks.

15. (ORIGINAL) An ink loader comprising the drip plate of claim 1.

16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An ink loader for a phase change ink printer, comprising:

at least one channel having an entry end and an exit end; and

a melt assembly, which includes

a drip plate including

an upper portion having substantially flat upper first and second sides,

wherein the first side of the upper portion faces oncoming ink sticks, and

a lower pointed portion having substantially flat lower first and second sides,

wherein the lower portion is not coplanar with the upper portion;

a melt plate fastened to the upper ~~second~~first side of the drip plate; and

a heating device thermally connected to one of the melt plate and the drip plate.

17. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 16, further comprising an adapter to position the assembly relative to the at least one channel.

18. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 16, wherein at least one of the drip plate and the melt plate is made from a nonferrous metal.

19. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 18, wherein at least one of the drip plate and the melt plate is made from aluminum.

20. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 16, wherein at least one of the drip plate and the melt plate is made from plastic

21. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 20, wherein at least one of the drip plate and the melt plate is injection molded.

22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The ink loader of claim 16, wherein the heating element is bonded to the ~~first~~second side of the upper portion of the drip plate.

23. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The ink loader of claim 22, wherein the heating element is a closed loop heater.

24. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The ink loader of claim 23, wherein the heating element includes a foil heater encapsulated in a thin electrically insulative film.

25. (ORIGINAL) The assembly of claim 16, wherein the melt plate has two large cutout portions.

26. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 16, wherein the melt plate includes at least one anchor tab extending from the second side of the drip plate.

27. (ORIGINAL) The ink loader of claim 16, wherein the melt plate includes a sliver strainer located near a lower portion of the drip plate.